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**Exploring equality, justice and identity amongst host nationals and expatriates:
Which human factors enable empowerment of Filipino aid workers?**

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Abstract

Providing decent work has been emphasised by the United Nations as a key objective in its Millennium Development Goals for poverty reduction (United Nations, 2000). Decent work includes capacity building between expatriate and their host national aid workers. Optimizing empowerment to enable decent work amongst local aid workers may depend on human factors, alongside wider poverty reduction efforts, such as economic and political reform. This study sought to explore which of local:expatriate numerical ratio, expatriate social dominance, strength of Filipino identity and perceptions of workplace justice were predictive of different levels of subjective empowerment amongst aid workers in one particular lower-income, high-poverty country, the Philippines.

Responses to an online survey available in both English and Tagalog were obtained from $N = 98$ employees of diverse locally operating aid organisations in the Philippines during two months in early 2011 (29% male; 71% female; mean age = 35.5 years; all resident in the Philippines). The survey included measures of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995), estimated local:expatriate numerical ratio, perceived social dominance (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), social identity (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999), justice (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993), social desirability (D. G. Fischer & Fick, 1993), estimated local:expatriate salary ratio and a number of demographic control measures (e.g., age, years of relevant work experience, level of education). Respondents chose to participate by clicking a link in an email sent by seven development sector practitioners who agreed to assist the researcher with distribution of invitations to their staff or contact lists. The link opened an online survey hosted by kwiksurveys.co.uk. Data was downloaded from the kwiksurveys.co.uk online database and analysed by the researcher using SPSS.

Controlling for age and other demographic variables, the best predictor of enabling empowerment was the fairness of personal interactions (interactional justice; $\beta = .331$). Interactional justice was also a significant predictor of the perceptions local employees had specifically about their impact in their workplace ($\beta = .295$), although this relationship was strongest when employees' sense of self respect was weaker, implying that a secure social identity may act as a buffer to consequences of injustice, all other things being equal (interaction effect $\beta = -.233$). Distributive justice predicted

each of four distinct facets of empowerment (competence; meaning; self-determination i.e., sense of control over one's work; and impact, i.e., sense of making a difference in one's work).

The overall pattern of results suggests that justice plays a more significant role than either dominance or identity in contributing to empowerment amongst Filipino aid employees. Strikingly, fair interpersonal treatment may matter more than distributive justice. Alongside the effects of justice, expatriate attitudes towards hierarchy and host nationals' sense of self respect are also significant factors, impacting empowerment in different ways. Given potential distortions arising from unknown response rate and a self-report methodology, further research, ideally with better control of sampling, is suggested. Possible avenues include exploring whether interpersonal treatment may matter more than distributive justice in collectivistic societies; whether self respect may act as a buffer against the effects of injustice; and how social dominance operates outside its traditional research contexts.

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